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Press Relaese

for the hearing "Human Rights in South East Asia"

The 7th EEC-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Düsseldorf under the presidency of the FRG ends today. The published information about the meeting indicates that economic topics took up much room during the consulations beside political topics like Kampuchea, Afghanistan and the Pacific. The ASEAN ministers have asked for a wider opening of the European market, intensified economic cooperation and more investments.

In spite of the appeal of several church-based and private human rights organisations, the German foreign minister Genscher has not undertaken sufficient steps to bring up human rights as a topic of the consulation. This is regrettable because many of the reports received by aid agencies and human rights organisations from South East Asia show a growing deterioration of the human rights situation:

- On the Philippines, the military as well as vigilante groups which are supported by the Aquino government, terrorize the people. Massacres, arbitrary arrests, disappearances and torture have reached dimensions similar to those reigning under the Marcos dictatorship.

- In Malaysia, Singapur and Burnei an Internal Security Act (ISA) allows the arrest of people for two years without trial. This measure can be arbitrarily extended.

- In Malaysia and Singapur the death penalty is mandatory by violations against drug and weapon laws. In Indonesia and Thailand, executions are taking place time and again.

- Indonesia still occupies the former Portuguese colony East Timor and the Western part of Papua New Guinea. The Indonesian army is trying to break the resistance of the indigenous people by genocide.

- In Thailand and Malaysia huge industrial projects and deforestation of the rain forest, as well as the exploitation of ressources against the will of the local people are leading to destruction of the environment.

- In Thailand and the Philippines, tens of thousands of young women are forced to sell themselves as prostitutes to foreign men. Many of them are being lured by false promises to Europe where they are also forced into prostitution.

The EEC countries hold responsibility for some of these human rights violations. The arms trade with Indonesia, the Importation of tropical wood from Malaysia and Thailand, the financial support of ecologially unacceptable projects like the Bakun dam in East Malaysia or the promotion of infrastructure projects on the Philippines in civil war areas, where the military and the vigilante groups commit severe human rights violations are some examples.

The hearing "Human Rights in South East Asia" is aimed at focussing these topics and discuss perspectives of a cooperation which is not ignorant of or even favorable to human rights violations.

Therefore we demand that the foreign ministers who are meeting in Düsseldorf today take immediate steps

- to abolish the death penalty in those countries
- to stop the exportation of weapons
- to stop the importation of tropical wood
- to promote no development projects in civil war areas
- to promote projects which support the subsistance of the people
- to stop mail order brides and forced prostitution
- to abolish the Internal Security Act, which enables arbitrary arrests
- to provide sufficient protection against police and military murder, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and torture and to punish those who are responsible
- to protect ethnic minorities and to garantee their right of self-determination.
- to ratify and follow the international conventions for the protection of human rights.

Amnesty International (Malaysia Ko-Gruppe), Bundeskongress der entwichlungspolitischen Aktionsgruppen, Die Grünen im Bundestag, Europäisches Menschenrechtskomitee für Malaysia/Singapur (KEHMA-S), Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, Jusos, Medico International, Pax Christi, Philippinenbüro e.V., Regenwälder Zeitung, Robin Wood, Südostasien-Informationsstelle, Terre des Femmes.